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19 September 1964

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

DOE review completed.

NSA review completed

NAVY review completed.

State Dept. review completed

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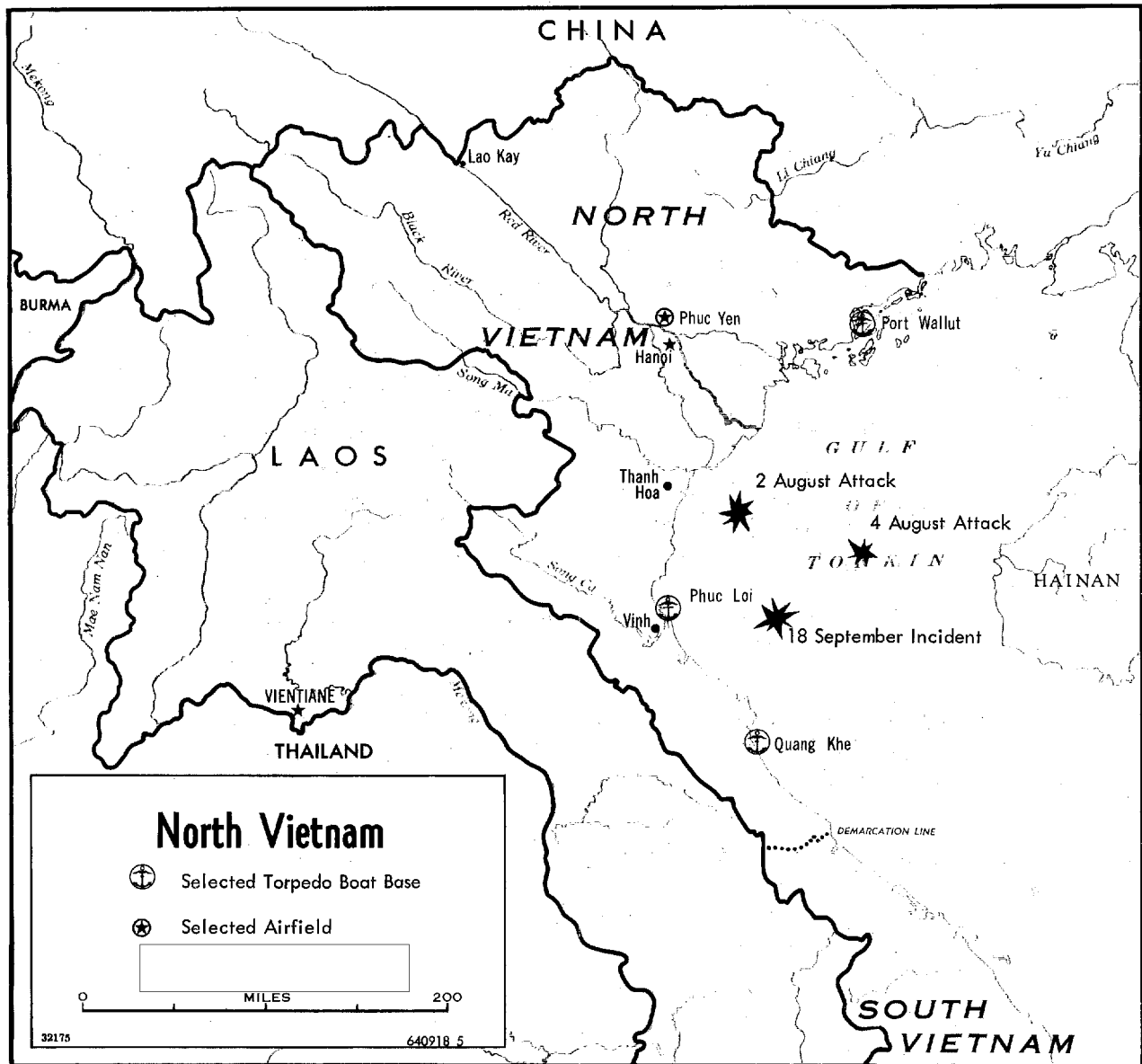
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DAILY BRIEF

*North Vietnam: (information as of 0300 EDT)

Two US destroyers, patrolling in the Gulf of Tonkin, on 18 September opened fire on several unidentified targets which may have been North Vietnamese patrol craft. The incident occurred about 55 miles east of Vinh during the hours of darkness.

At approximately 2023 (1223 GMT) the USS Morton, one of the two US vessels comprising the "Desoto" patrol, reported that its radar had disclosed four unidentified vessels. After turning and firing warning shots at the vessels Morton reported that the "Target" vessels had increased speed and were "closing in." The two destroyers then opened fire on the vessels and at least three of them were believed hit.

Subsequent reports from the patrol indicate that it received no fire from the unidentified craft and no visual sightings were made. Shortly thereafter the destroyers fired at another unidentified craft but again no sightings were made. A reconnaissance aircraft operating in the area at the time of the incident reported seeing the fire from the destroyers and noted the wake from several unidentified vessels but made no sighting of the vessels themselves.

Intercepted communications have revealed that the North Vietnamese were aware of the presence of this patrol as early as 17 September and had issued alert instructions to its naval units. One of these, issued shortly before the incident occurred, specifically ordered naval units in the south to beware of

the American vessels and to "avoid provocation." Subsequently North Vietnamese naval communications appear to be concerned with defensive action and reflect fear of air attack by US forces. Reconnaissance aircraft and a third US destroyer which were ordered to search the area of the incident at first light for evidence of an attack were delayed by rain squalls and to date have provided no clarification.

There is no conclusive evidence that Hanoi has made a decision to attack this patrol. The limited evidence available does suggest that Hanoi wished to avoid any encounter even though its naval forces had been alerted for a possible US attack.

If the targets seen on radar were North Vietnamese naval vessels they may have been attempting to shadow the patrol craft rather than attack it. One intercepted message on 17 Sept indicated that a vessel did shadow the destroyers for a short time.

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The North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry has emphatically denounced as slanderous reports in US news media that North Vietnamese patrol boats attacked US warships. They state however, that from the shore "one could see big explosions, flares, and US aircraft circling above the sea." "It is obvious," according to the Hanoi news release, "that the US is repeating this faction once again to have a pretext

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for attacking the DRV." Chinese Communist propaganda has repeated the Hanoi statement and reiterated that the US actions have "greatly increased the danger of an extension of the Indochina war."

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Communist China: Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin told Ambassador Thompson on 11 September that Moscow believes the Chinese Communists could detonate a nuclear device at any time.

25X1 The present US estimate [REDACTED] 25X1
25X1 [REDACTED] is that the weight of available evidence
indicates the Chinese will not have enough fissionable
material for a test device until after 1964. [REDACTED] 25X1
25X1 [REDACTED] however,
the possibility of an earlier detonation cannot be completely discounted.

Moscow had detailed information about the Chinese nuclear program until 1960. The Soviets themselves have stated, however, that they have not been able to keep well informed since then.

Khrushchev's references this week to "monstrous" and "terrible" weapons may have been motivated at least in part by concern over the impact a Chinese nuclear detonation could have at this time. 25X1
[REDACTED]

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West Germany - USSR: [Chancellor Erhard does not expect a great deal to come out of his forthcoming meeting with Khrushchev, but he feels that the personal contact will be beneficial.]

[Erhard told Ambassador McGhee on 16 September that he did not expect any change in the Soviet or German positions on the German question, but that some limited progress might be made regarding Berlin. He may hope to get Soviet recognition of ties between West Berlin and West Germany.]

[Erhard said he would be available for the meeting only around the end of November and beginning of December, or that the visit could take place around the end of January. At an ambassadorial meeting in Moscow, West German Ambassador Groepper said he thinks Khrushchev might want to make the visit before the 15 December Communist conference.]

[In Groepper's opinion, Khrushchev hopes his visit will help persuade the nonaligned countries to emulate him in dealing with both Germanies. In addition, the ambassador believes Khrushchev wants to instill in the Chinese Communists the idea that his problems with the West are under control and that he can now devote full attention and resources to the struggle with Peiping.]

[Khrushchev, however, appears to have no overriding reason to make a hastily contrived trip to Germany. Furthermore, a central committee plenum sometime in November and the 15 December preparatory conference are likely to occupy a major portion of his attention.]

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- The Special Assistant for National Security Affairs
- The Scientific Adviser to the President
- The Director of the Budget

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- The Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
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- The Director of Intelligence and Research

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- The Secretary of the Navy
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- Chief of Naval Operations, United States Navy
- Chief of Staff, United States Air Force
- Chief of Staff, United States Army
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- The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of Navy
- The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

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